

January 31, 1963

SOVIET BUILDUP IN CUBA

Mr. KEATING, Mr. President, the Soviet buildup in Cuba is mounting anew, and exceedingly serious evidence arrives daily. Not only are the Soviets building up their existing forces and equipment in Cuba into a state of top-notch readiness, but additional material and equipment continues to flow into the island under suspicious circumstances.

In his press conference of last week, the President said that we have had evidence of only one large vessel carrying predominantly military equipment into Cuba since October. The very next day, on Friday, January 25, a second large vessel arrived. Under maximum security conditions, it unloaded a cargo of armaments.

The route followed by these two ships is generally termed a "maximum security route," a passage traveled by the Soviets through areas where the United States is least able to maintain adequate surveillance of ships' contents.

It is also, ominously enough, the identical route followed last summer by the first of the Soviet vessels carrying medium-range, ground-to-ground missiles into Cuba.

While the Soviets continue to ship military equipment under tight security conditions into Cuba and to unload it at docking points where outsiders are rigorously excluded—only Soviets are allowed to handle it—there is also a semi-monthly passenger steamship service between Cuba and Russia and a weekly nonstop Moscow-Havana flight. These provide ample facilities for the Soviets to transport additional equipment to their newest satellite—under conditions that make tight U.S. surveillance difficult, if not impossible.

Furthermore, while evidence mounts of new equipment pouring in from the Communist bloc, there is continuing, absolutely confirmed and undeniable evidence that the Soviets are maintaining and guarding the medium-range sites they had previously constructed in Cuba. There has been no Soviet move to dismantle these concrete sites or withdraw the launching bases, as one might expect if the Soviets intended in good faith to keep these missiles out of Cuba in the future.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT STATEMENT

4:30 PM January 31, 1963

With regard to AP 98 and UPI 97 attributing certain remarks to Senator Keating:

Following the President's agreement with Chairman Khrushchev, we observed the ballistic missile sites in Cuba being dismantled. Missiles, transporters and missile erectors were photographed enroute to, and at port areas; being loaded aboard ship; and aboard ships enroute to the USSR. Concrete launch pads were broken up and other parts of the installations were destroyed. There is no evidence that these sites are usable, that they are being used for any military purpose, or that they are being maintained.

Within a few days of the President's press conference last week, two large Soviet ships, KASIMOV and BALTICA, did arrive in Cuba. There is no evidence that either carried offensive weapons.

In his testimony before the House Armed Services Committee yesterday, Sec. McNamara said, "Since removal of the missiles, our coverage has not revealed the existence of strategic weapons systems in Cuba."

This remains a true statement.